

Stewardship of Federal Forests

CASE STUDY

Congress authorized the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLR) in the 2009 Omnibus Public Lands Management Act to accelerate restoration on high priority landscapes through collaborative, science-based approaches. In doing so, CFLR aims to promote forest health and resiliency, reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires, and support economic stability in rural communities.

One project under CFLR, the Southwest Crown of the Continent (SWCC), brings together partners from the forestry industry, environmental advocacy groups, State and local agencies, and other groups to restore over 1.4 million acres of high peaks, aspen glades, conifer forests, rivers, and native grasslands. In order to reduce fire risk to nearby communities and increase forest health and resiliency to threats, the project has leveraged multiple funding sources, including CFLR funds, to treat in areas like the Meadow Smith project, located in the wildland-urban interface on the Flathead National Forest. The project has made use of stewardship contracting authorities, in this case with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, which enable the Forest Service to work closely with communities to restore and maintain healthy forests.



When the Condon Mountain Fire erupted from a lighting strike in July 2012—just four air-miles northeast of the community of Condon—the units that had previously been treated in the Meadow Smith project area successfully served as a fuel break. This fuel break allowed firefighters to reduce their exposure and safely manage the fire and helped preserve large diameter ponderosa pine and larch trees. Without the treatments, it's very likely that the mortality for these trees would have been high.

In FY 2015, the Forest Service and its partners planted 125 acres of Whitebark Pine in wildfire burned areas within the SWCC area, a species that reduces runoff, provides food for over 100 wildlife species, including the threatened grizzly bear, and acts as a “nurse” to allow other vegetation to establish in the harsh conditions at high elevations. Since its inception in 2010, the SWCC project has treated over 21,000 acres for hazardous fuels reduction. Forest Service and its partners have also revegetated and reforested over 10,000 acres, achieving more than double their 10-year goal in half the time.